THE PIANOFORTE PEDALS

BY

WM. D. ARMSTRONG
(A. G. O.)

PRICE $ 1.50 NET

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INTRODUCTION

In view of the fact that there has been much material written on the use of the Pianoforte Pedals, the author has attempted to arrange in a concise form some of the principles necessary for the Pianist to know, so that clearness and pure tone-quality, two important elements in artistic piano playing, may be comprehended and obtained.

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THE PIANOFORTE PEDALS.

CHAPTER I.

The general names now in use will be employed in the following pages. "Loud" for the right pedal, "soft" for the left, and "*sostenuto*" for the middle. The older masters adopted the terms "tre corde", which meant to use the loud pedal and thereby releasing the dampers from the strings, and "una corde", to shift the keys or hammers so that only one string would sound. As the modern arrangement has been perfected during the past century, it is almost beyond comprehension that such colossal works could have been composed at that period considering the instruments at their command.

The first Harpsichords and Claviers had no pedals. Later on stops were used to control the dampers of the different divisions. Afterwards pedals were attached to assist the hands in controling the stops. The question as to who was the first to make use of these pedals is not definitely settled. Some German writers claim Herr Holefeld, while in England John Hayward, in about 1670, is said to have invented them. Until 1806 they were placed on either side of the stand, or frame supporting the instrument. A more satisfactory arrangement was perfected by Broadwood in 1783. He dampered, or stopped the strings with a strip of soft felt or fabric with one pedal (una corde), and raised it with the other (tre corde). Later each key controlled a separate damper, and the old system of shifting the keys, or dampers still remains in the Grand Pianoforte.

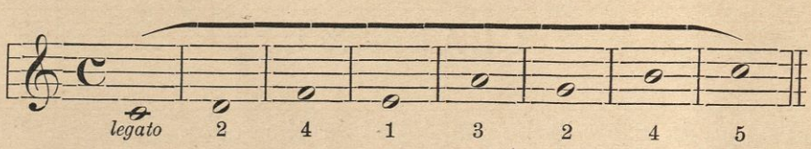
Pollini devised the Forte (loud) pedal. When that pedal is depressed all the dampers are raised from the strings allowing the partial overtones and harmonics to sound, increasing the volume of tone.

A third pedal has been added to the Grand Pianoforte called the "*Sostenuto*", or "Middle Pedal". It sustains the Bass notes from the lowest up to the middle octave.

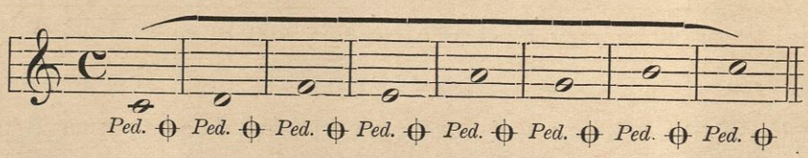
CHAPTER II.

The function of the loud (right) pedal is to sustain the tones. By means of it one can produce a most perfect *legato*, and carry a tone, or tones over long distances when it is impossible for the fingers to reach them. At the outset we will consider the subject of *legato*. This term is defined as the process of "binding", or "blending", one tone with another. The textbooks and dictionaries give a variety of information; but, in the end the result to be desired is a binding of the tones.

If the following passage be played strict legato without the pedal, the tone will be pure, but there will not be that complete fullness produced by the related harmonics and overtones as when played with the pedal. Only the one string vibrates, and the only harmonics, or overtones are those of that one string:



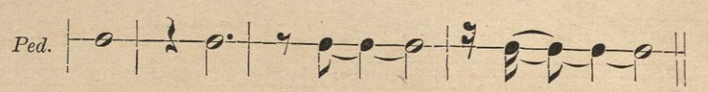
Play it and use the Pedal with each note.



Here you have with each tone all the sympathetic tones of the whole instrument. Some very interesting physical experiments may be made under this head, but space will not permit their discussion at this time. The great aim of all pianists is to get a large, full tone; to get all the volume possible; and the correct use of the pedal is the only means of reaching that end.

Many different marks and characters have been used to indicate when the pedal should be depressed and released, such as:

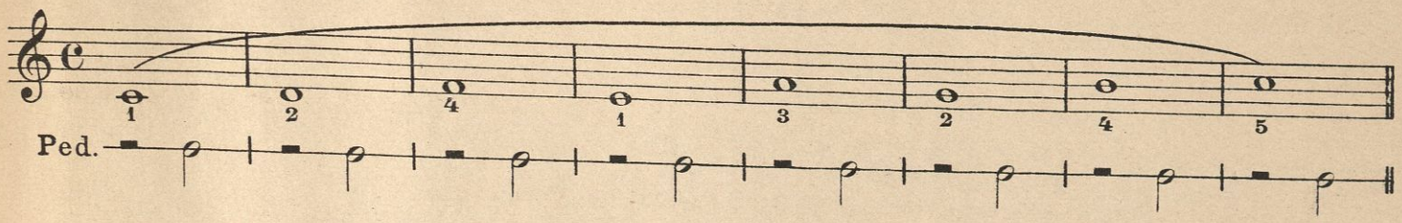
however, the most accurate is the extra line below the staff with the notes engraved in it. —



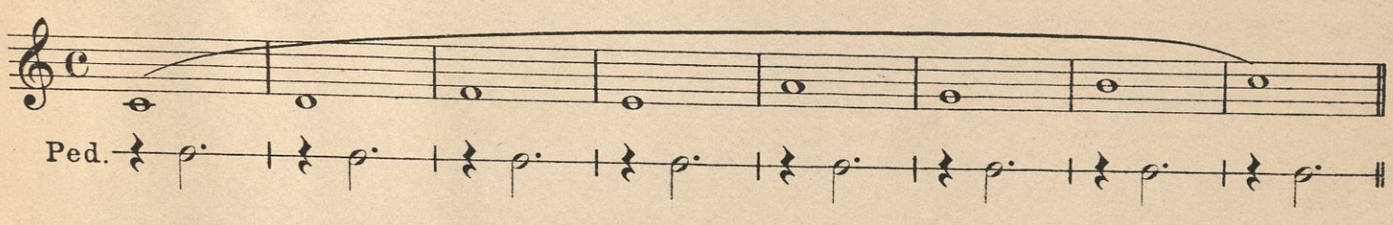
This system was proposed by Herr Hans Schmidt in 1875, and will be used throughout this work. The pedal is to be pressed down and held during the length of the note, and released at the rests.

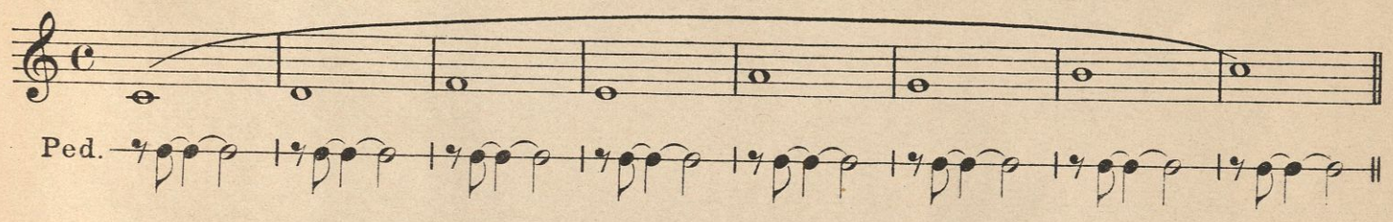
In *legatissimo* passages the pedal is to be depressed the instant the tone vibrates fully, and the fingers should not leave the key until the pedal has caught the tone.

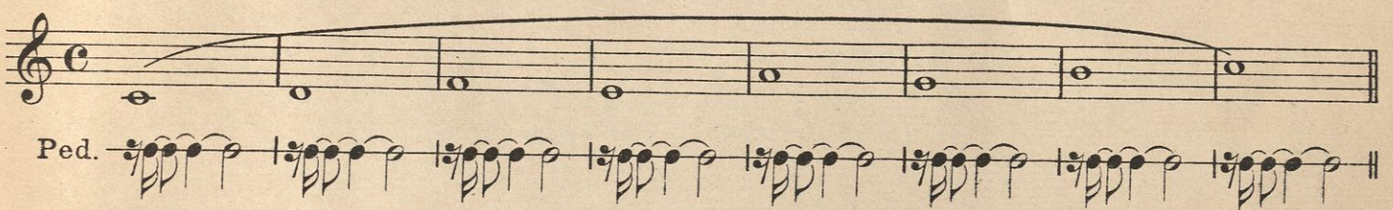
The syncopated movement is at first the most readily comprehended, use it generally after one half of the notes value has elapsed.



A more sustained quality may be produced as follows:

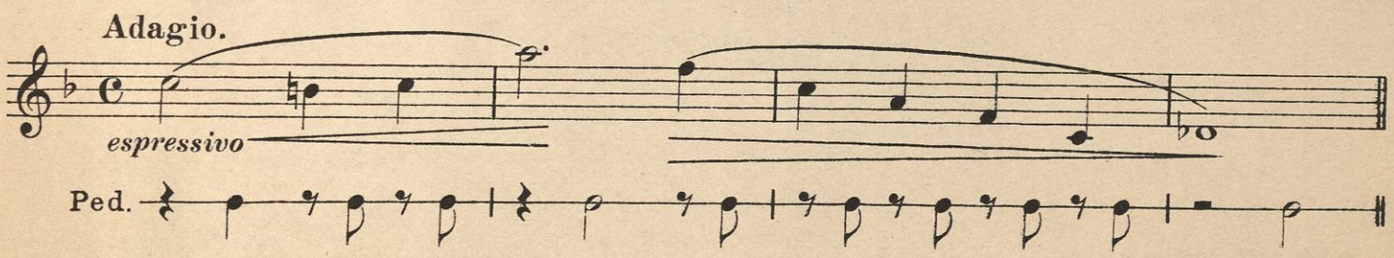


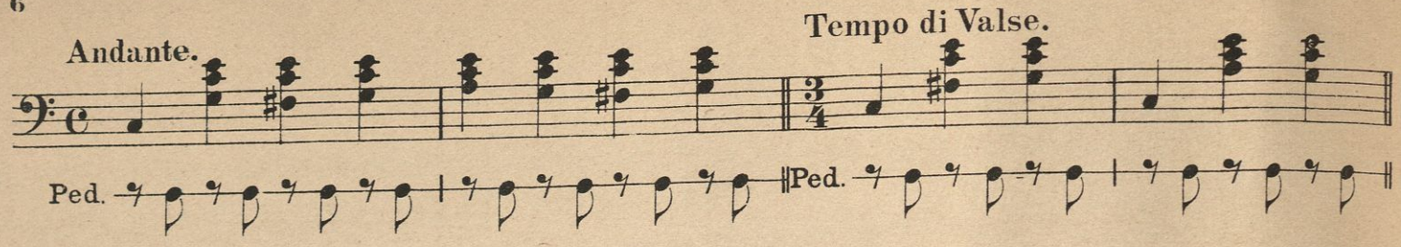




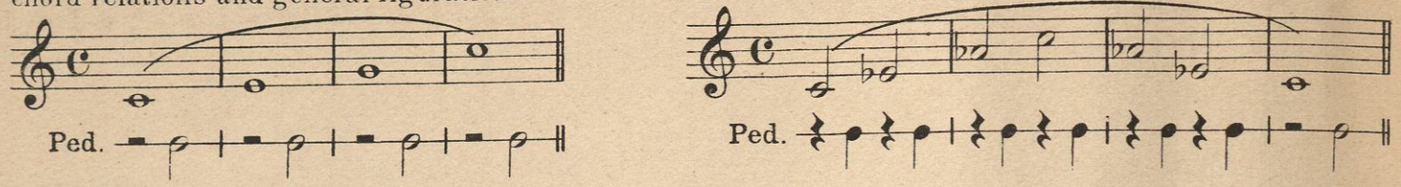
And finally until there is an almost imperceptible movement of the pedal between the notes.

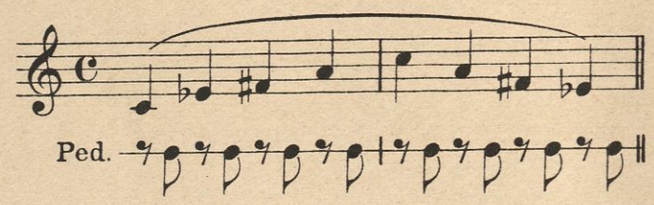
Full-tone quality and clearness are the objects to be obtained. Consequently, the pedal should be changed with each note (as far as possible). Particularly so with the melody, or when notes foreign to the chord are introduced in the accompaniment.

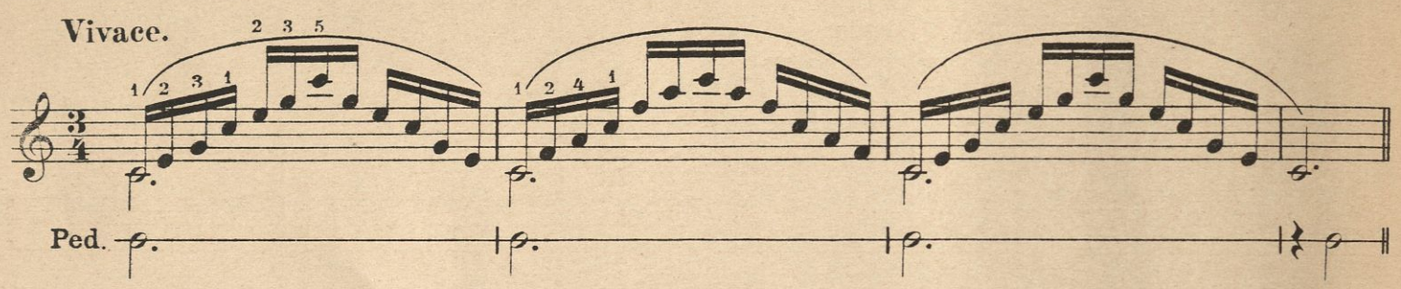


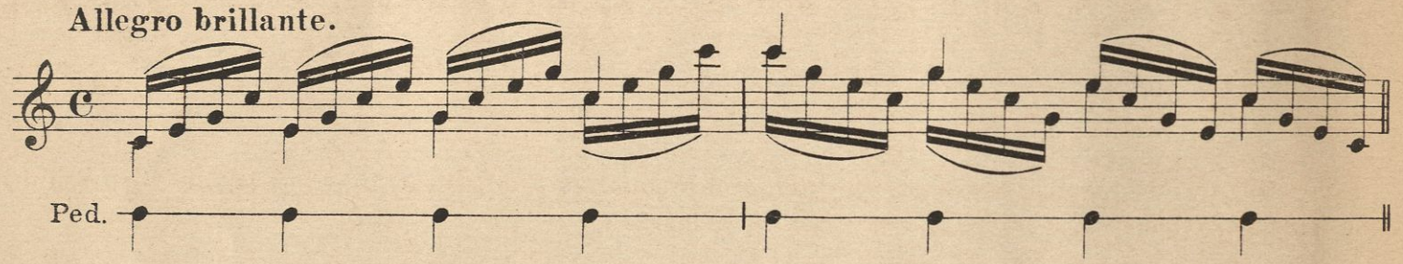


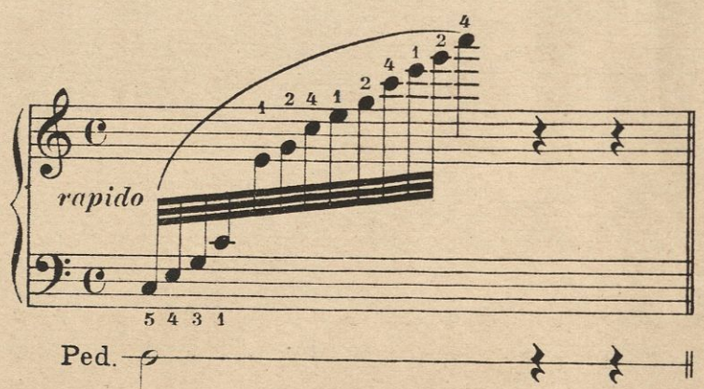
When the melody consists of broken chords (Arpeggios) the pedal will sustain each note; but when they are to be played quickly for certain brilliant technical effects, the performer will have to determine their chord relations and general figuration.



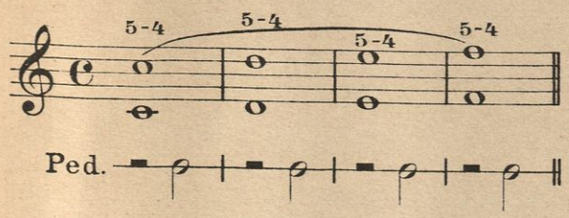


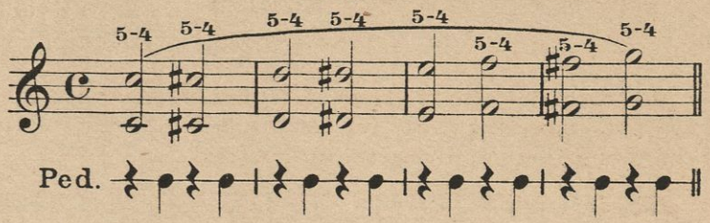




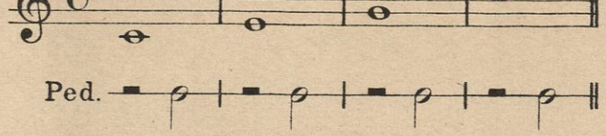


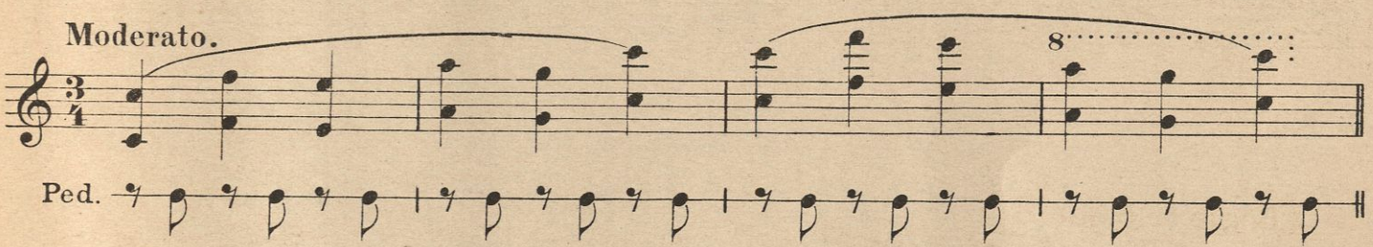
Melodies consisting of Octaves, when the notes are to be played slowly and close together, the substitution of the fingers will be found practical.



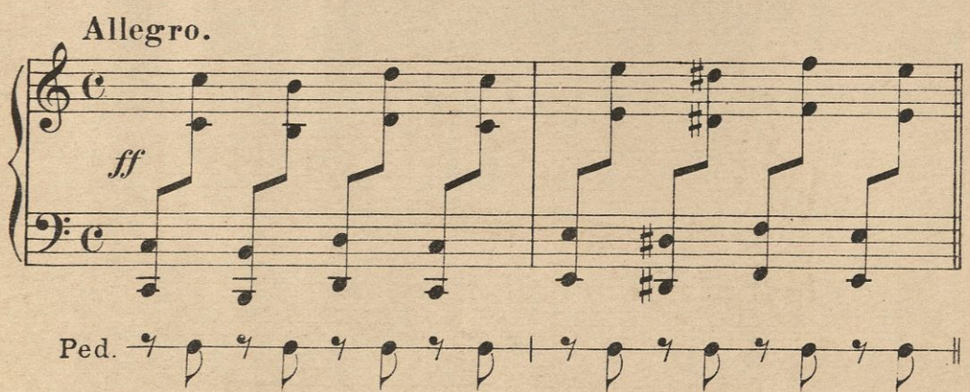


Where the legato cannot be produced by fingers, then the pedal must be used.



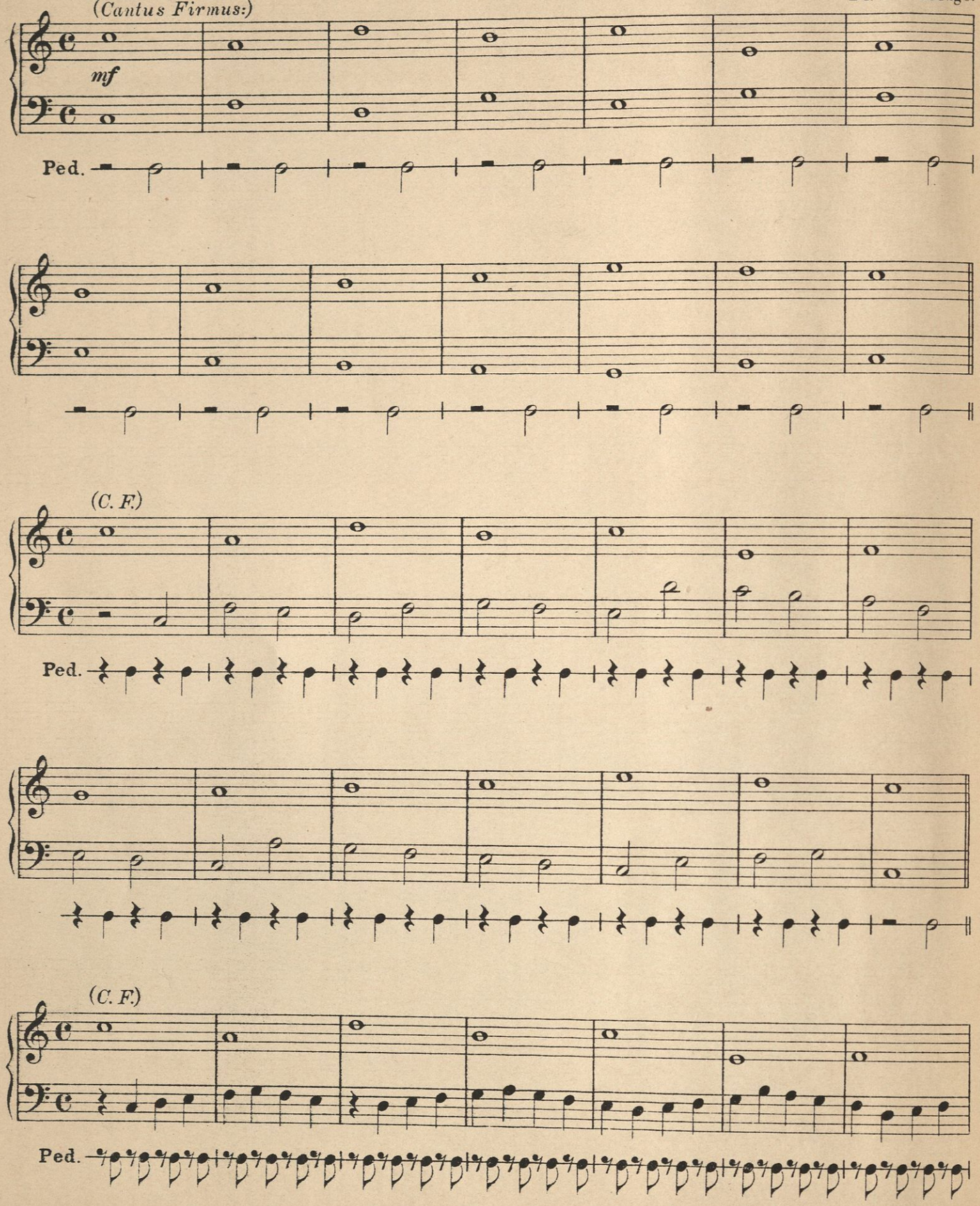


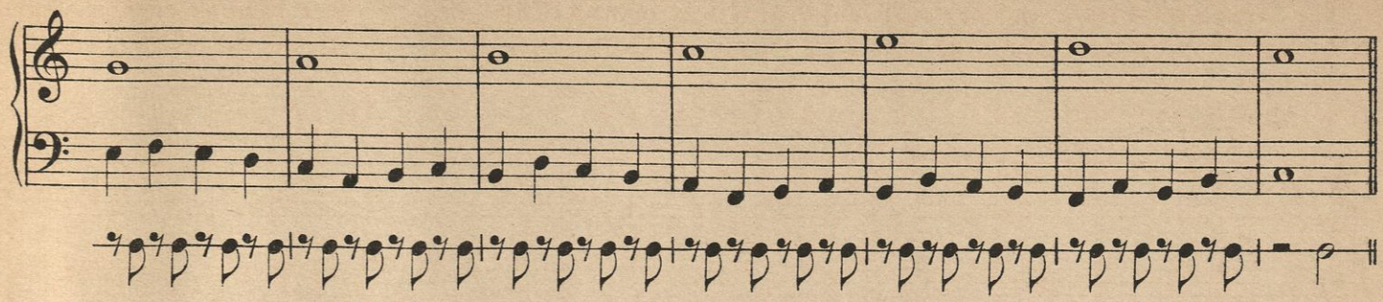
In brilliant and bravura passages the performer must use judgment as regards the figuration and harmonic design.



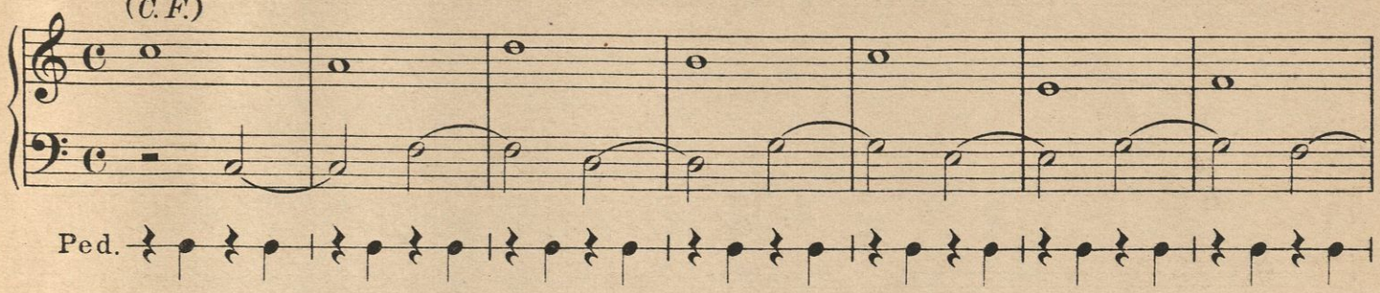
The string quartette and organ furnish the best means of training the ear to hear each part distinctly. In playing chorals or music in from two to four parts, the pedal should be changed with each note.

Moderato. Dr. J. F. Bridge.

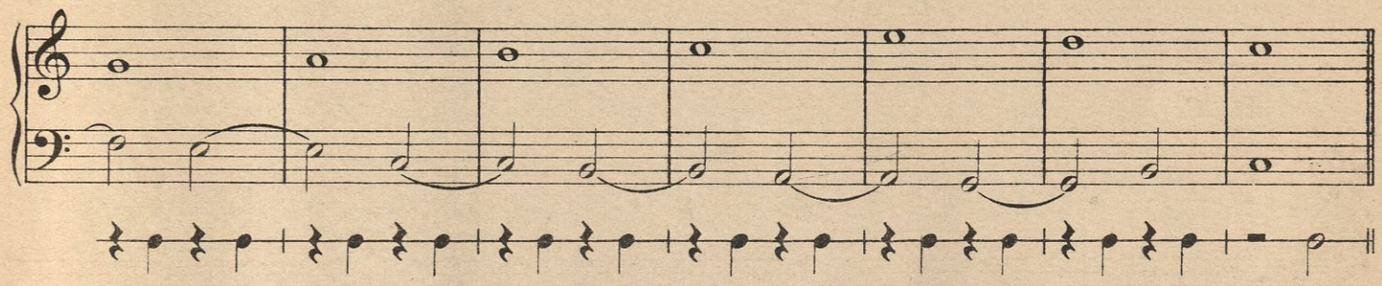




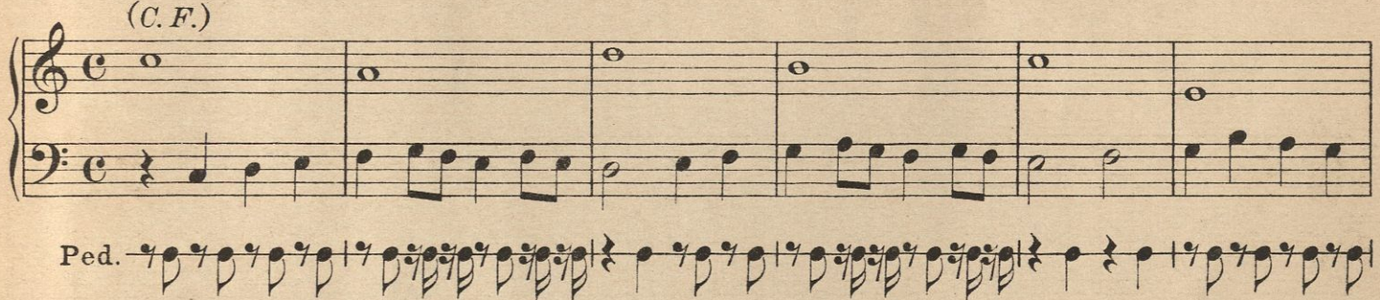
(C. F.)



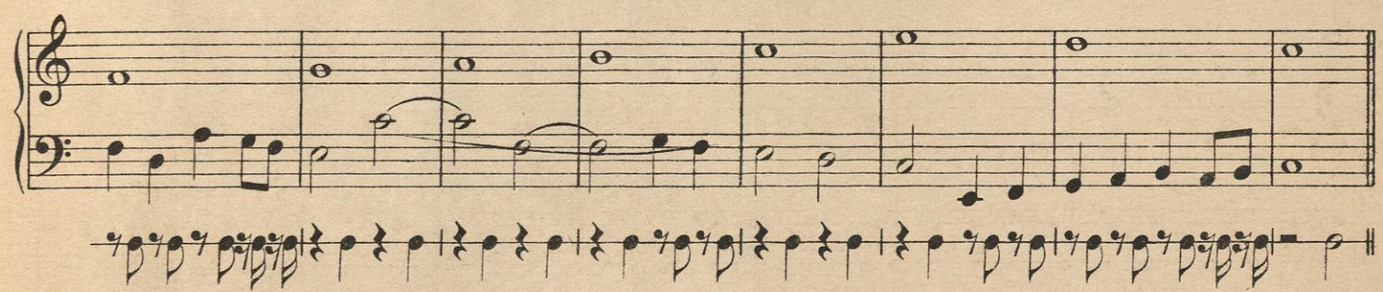
Ped.



(C. F.)

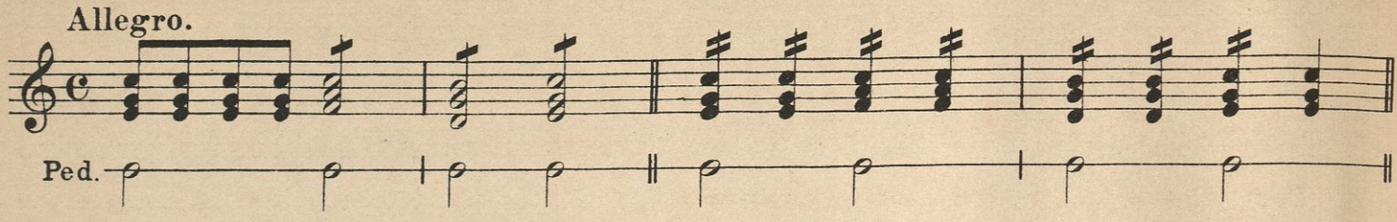


Ped.



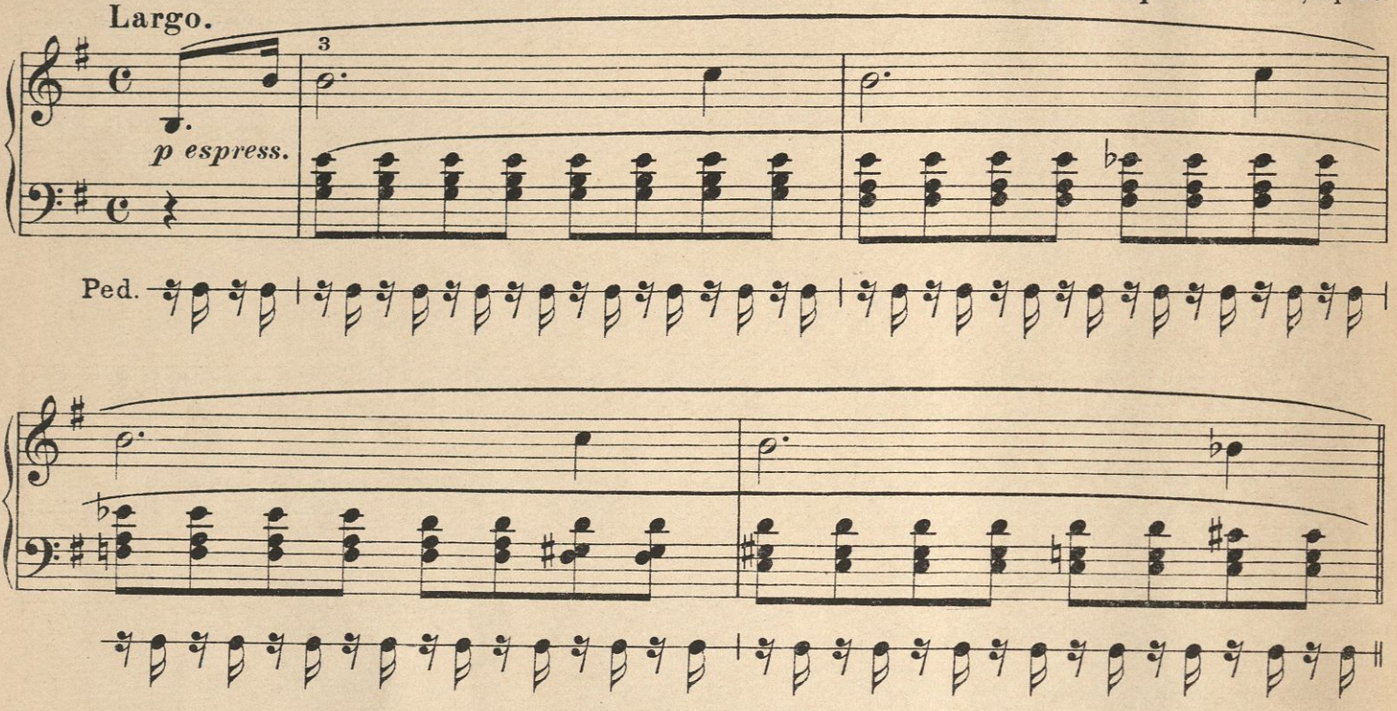
Young students are usually advised to use the pedal with each change in the Harmony. This, in most instances is permissible, but the subject admits of much discussion from many view-points:

Reitterated chords in the same position when played rapidly may have the same pedal;

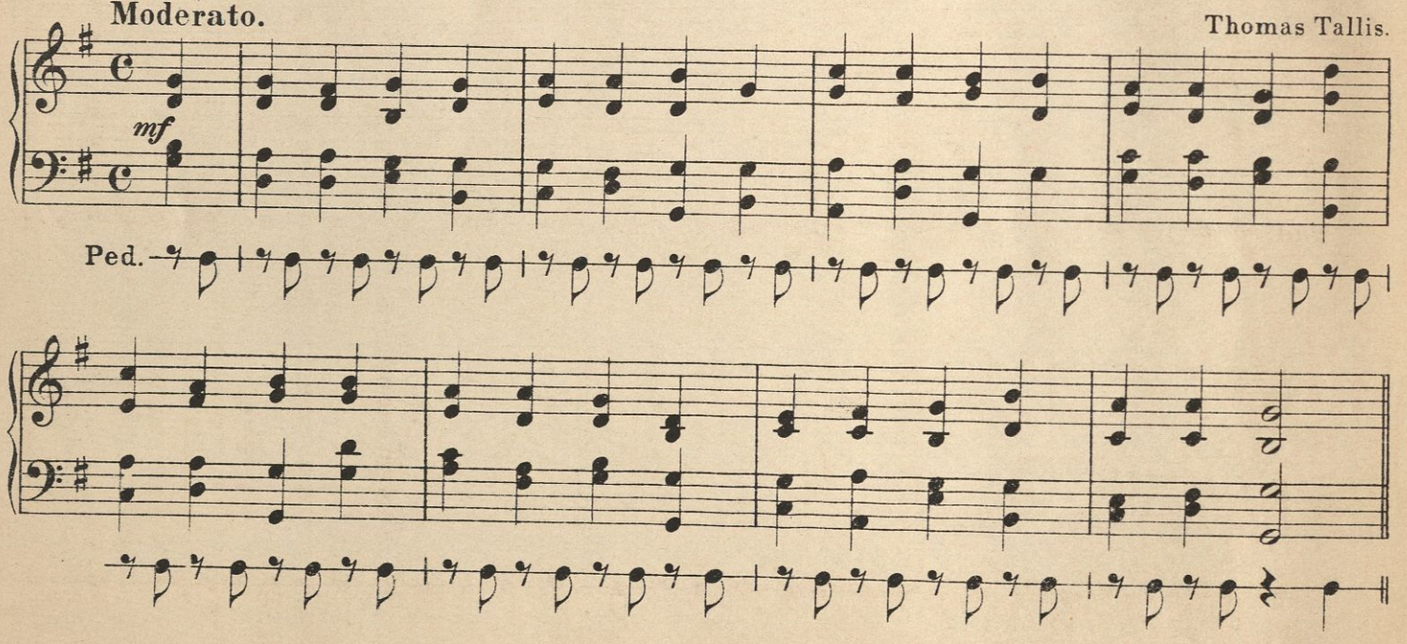


however, in slow movement it is well to change it with each chord, so as to eradicate the sympathetic harmonics which are constantly sounding.

Fr. Chopin (1809-1849), Op. 28.

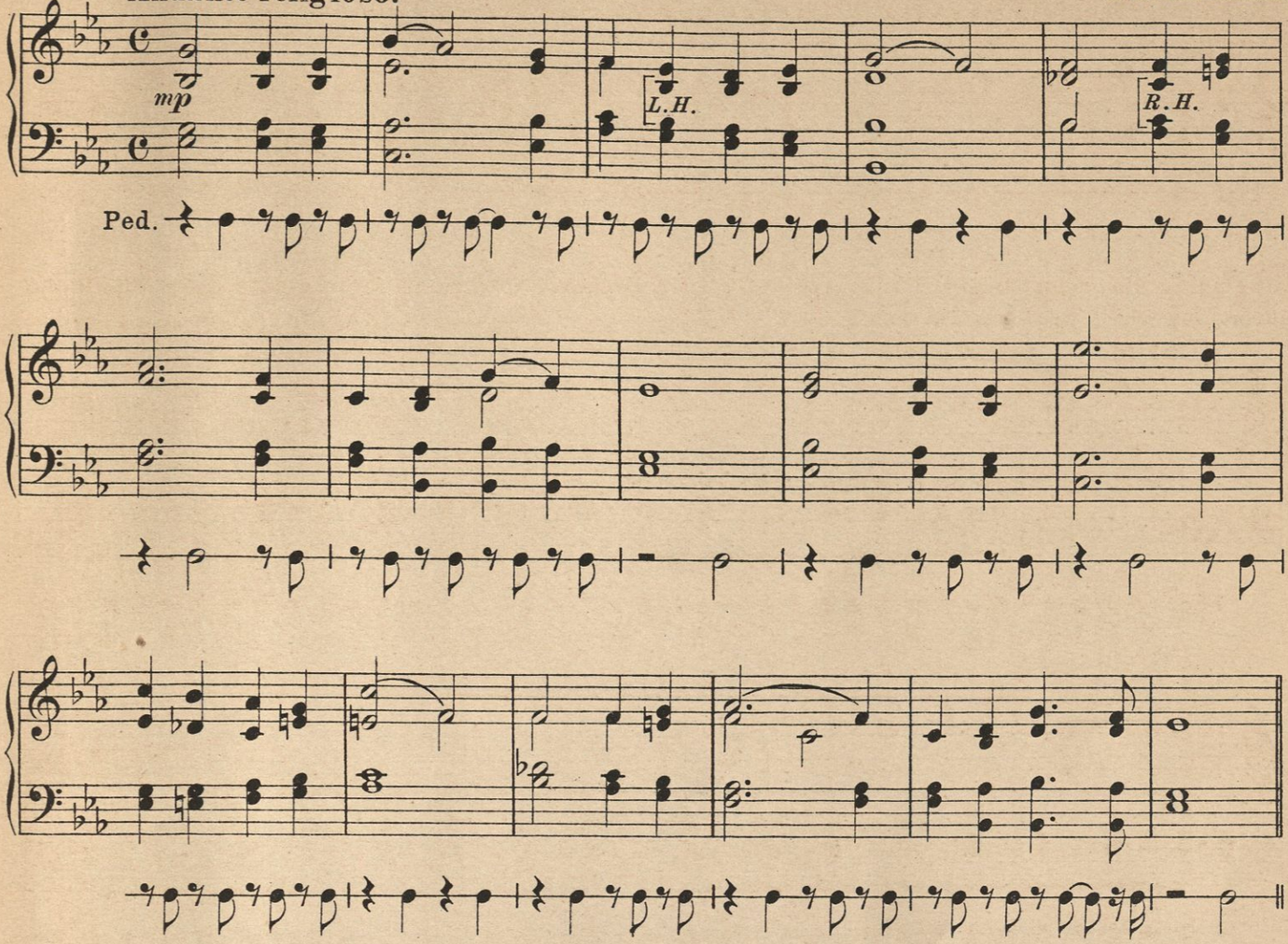


In the following choral the notes are of equal value.



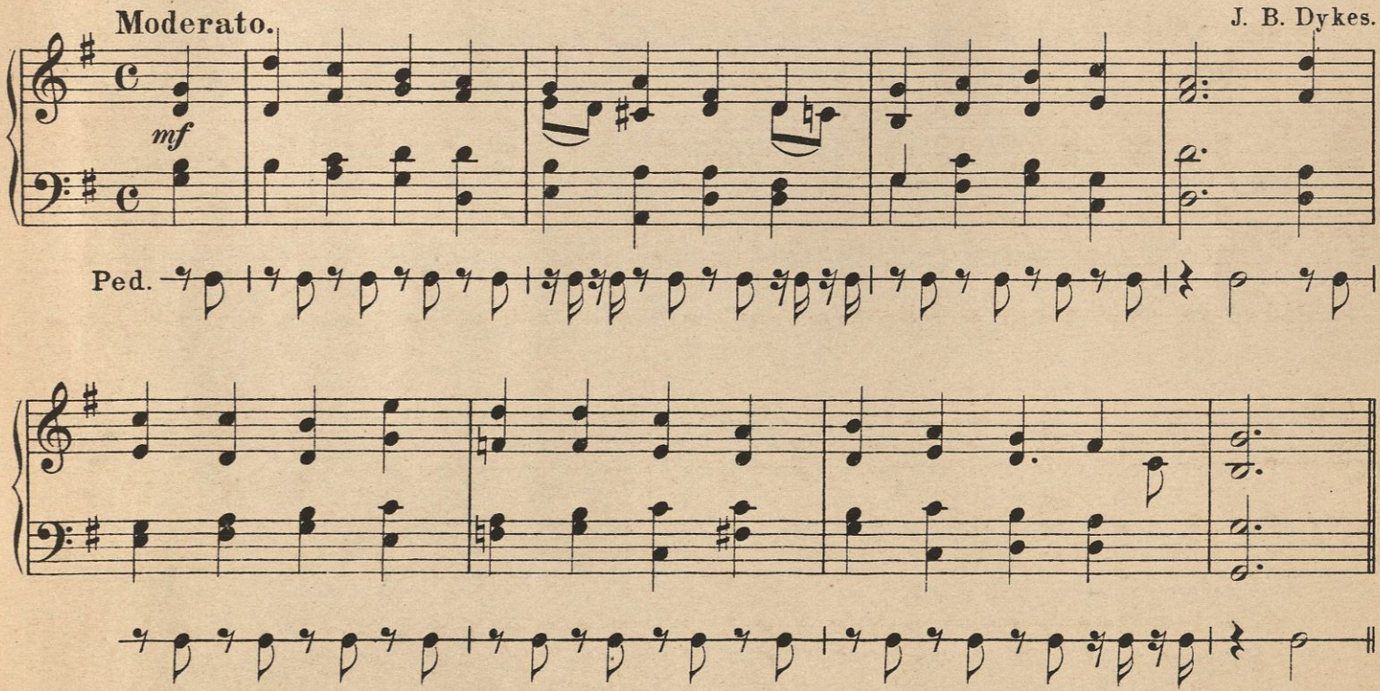
Observe the passing notes in the soprano below:

Andante religioso. F. Mendelssohn.



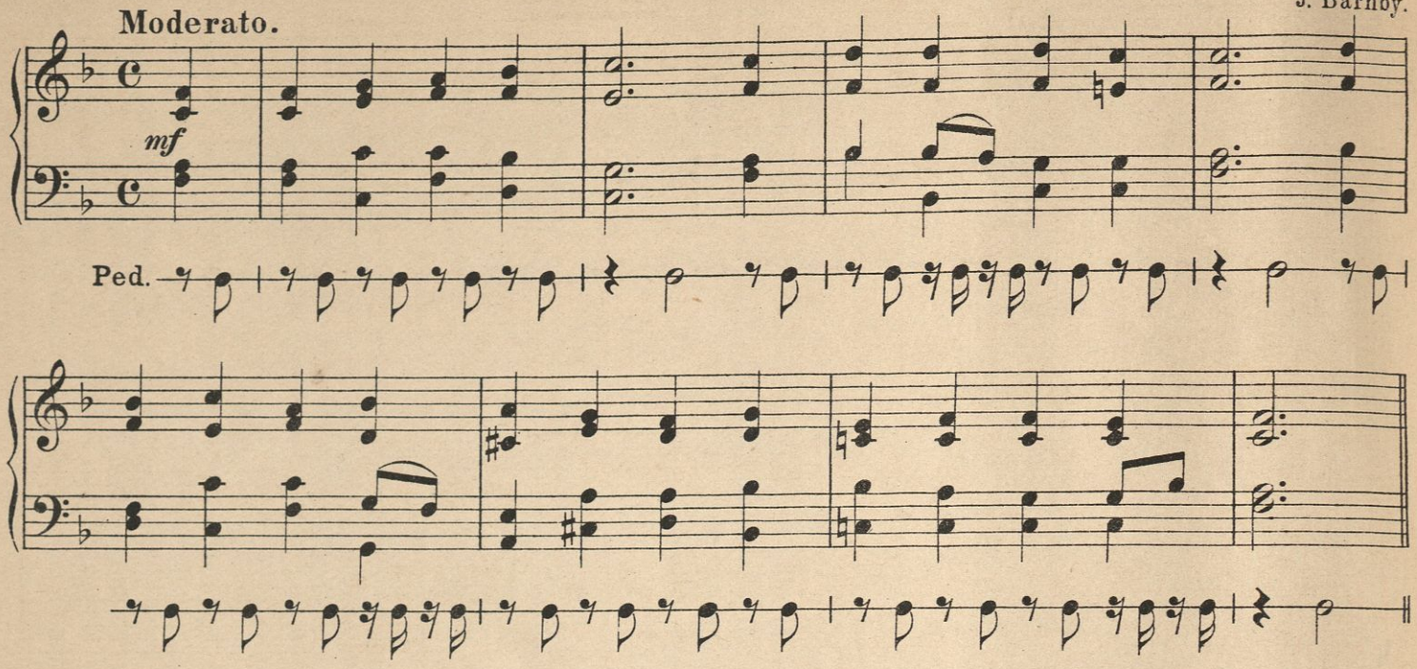
Passing notes in the Alto:

Moderato. J. B. Dykes.



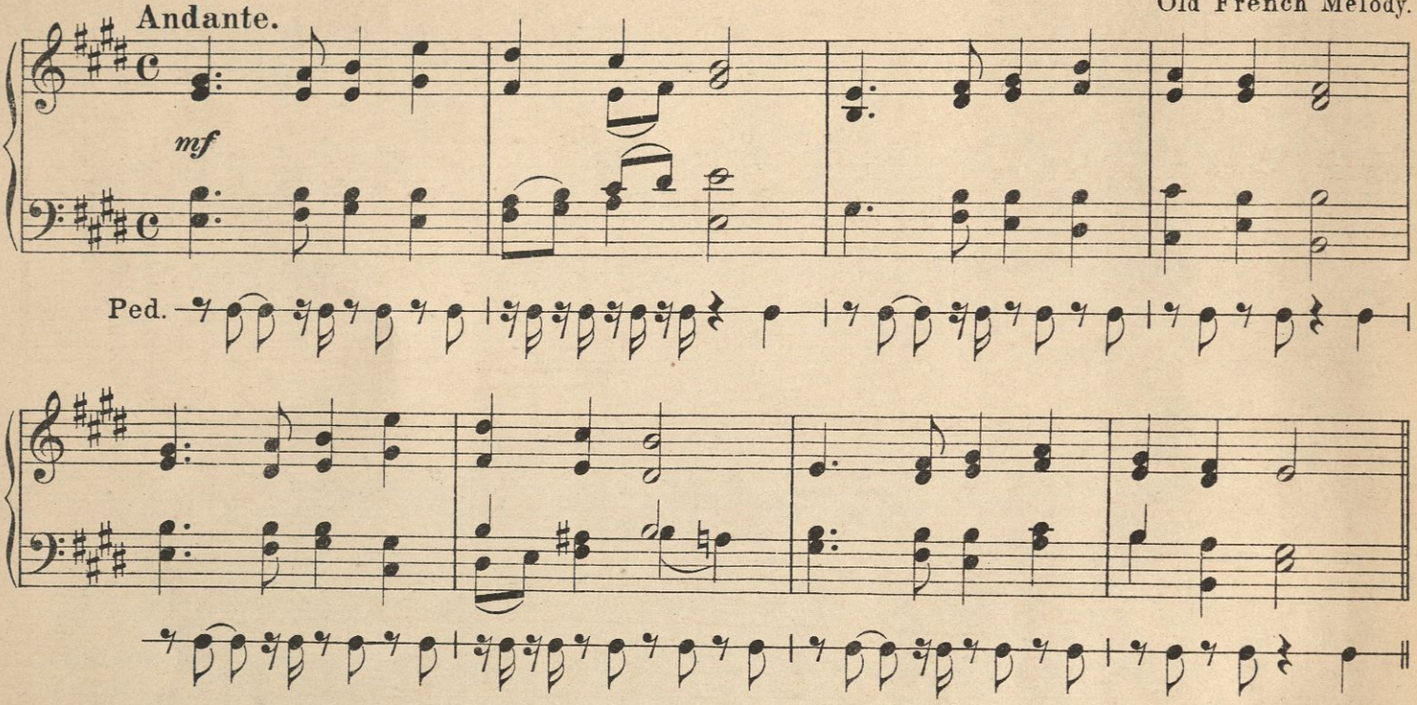
Passing notes in the Tenor:

J. Barnby.



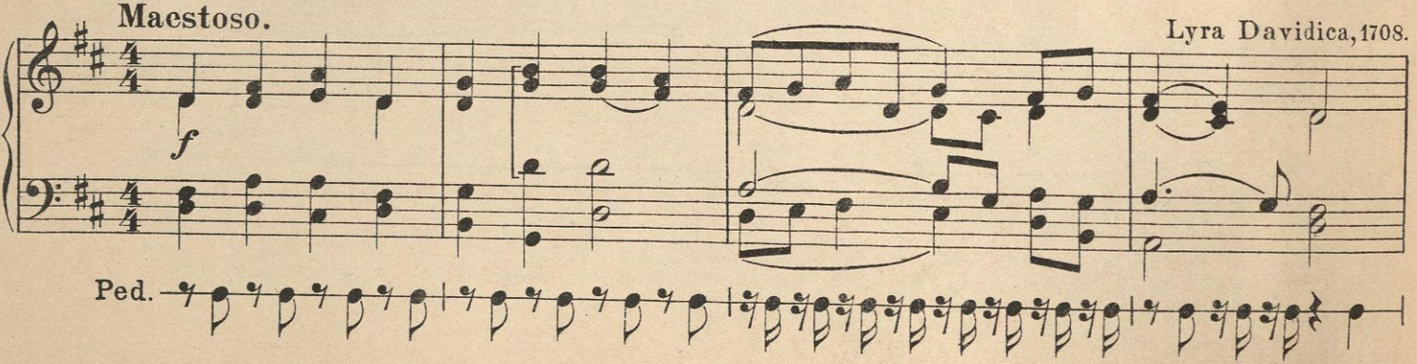
Passing notes in the Bass:

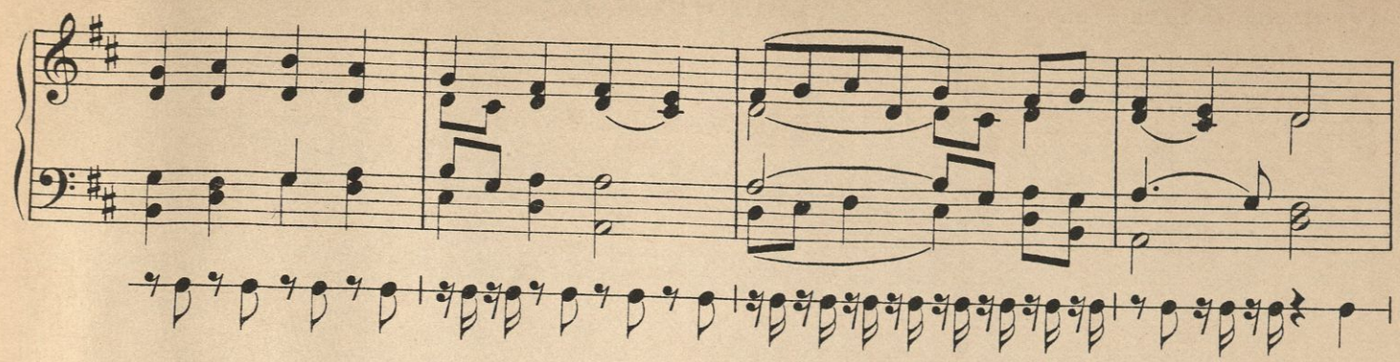
Old French Melody.

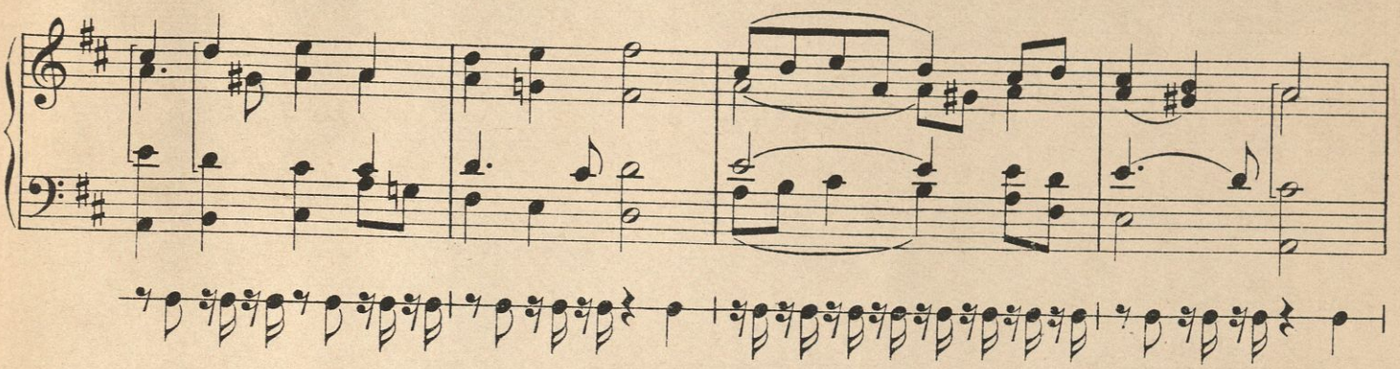


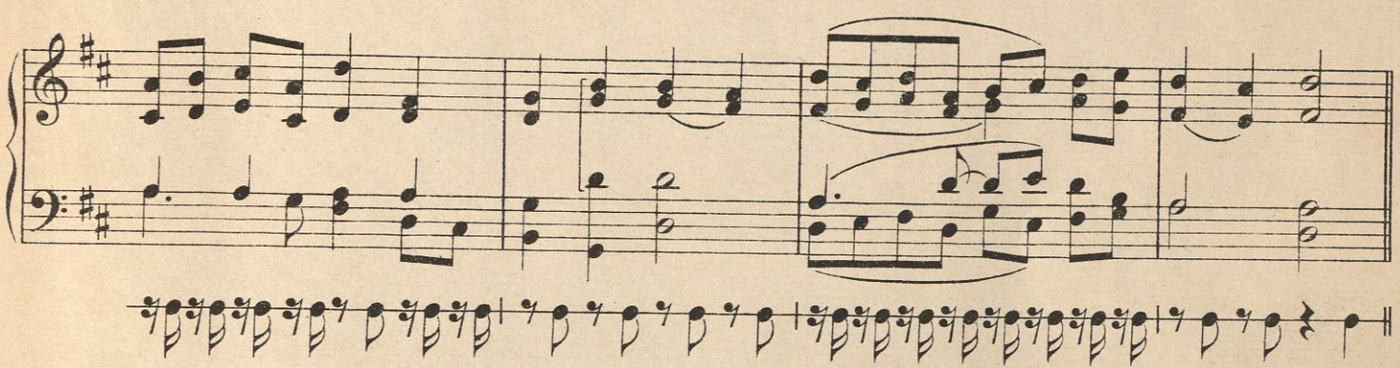
Passing notes in all the voices:

Lyra Davidica, 1708.





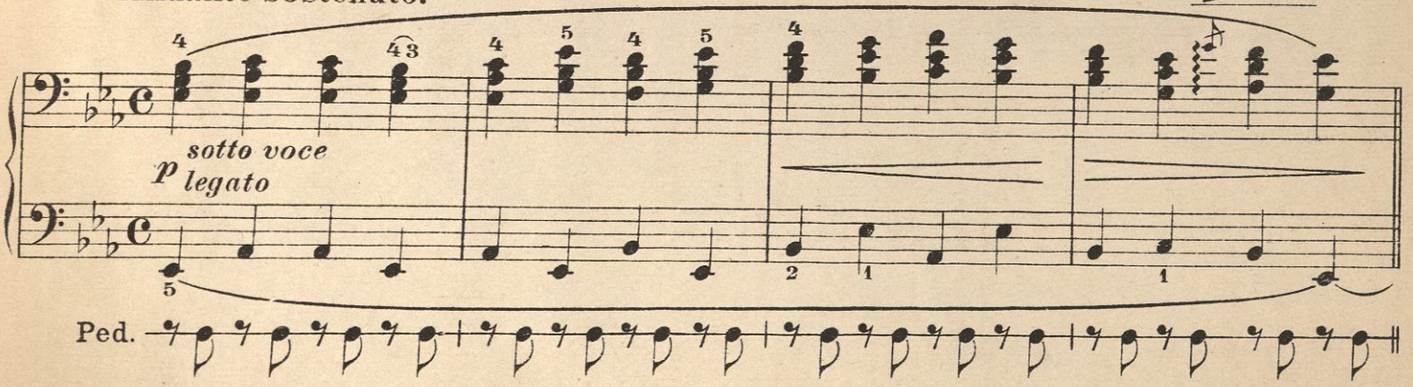




F. Chopin, Op. 37 N°1.

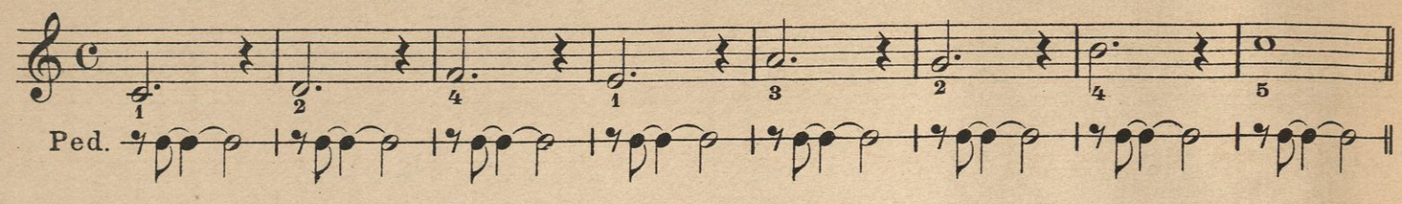
Andante sostenuto.

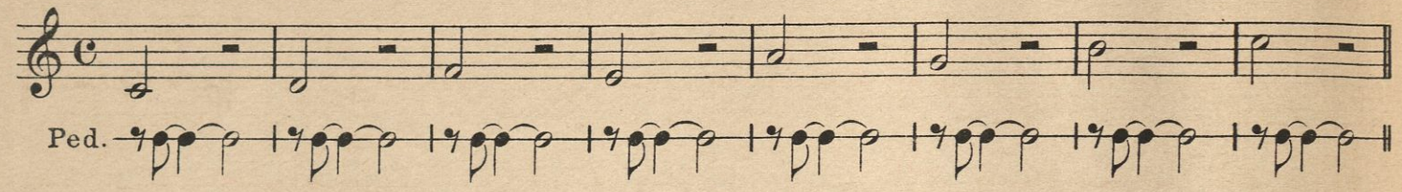
Execution.

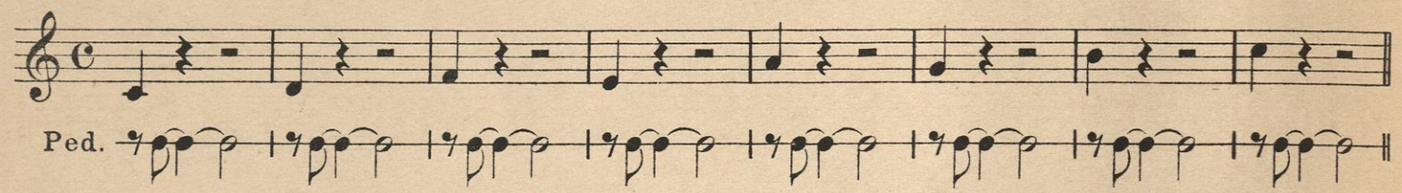


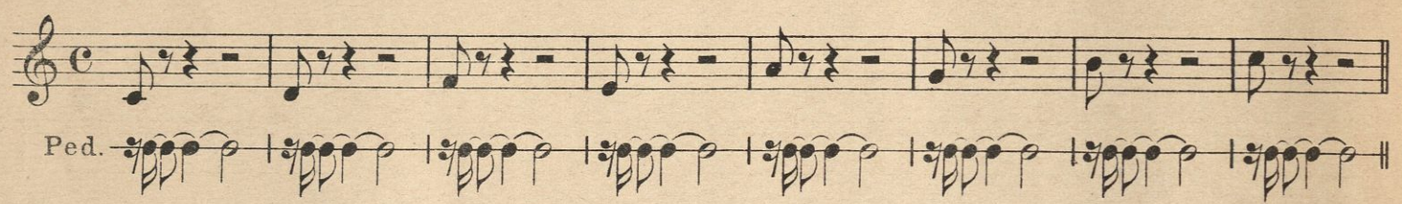
Chapter III.

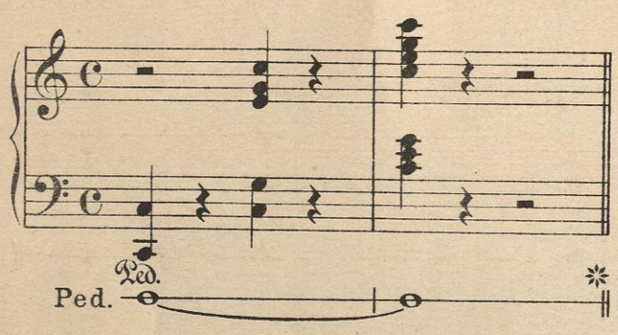
Tones may be sustained by the pedal when rests occur in the music, and are usually indicated as such by the composer.

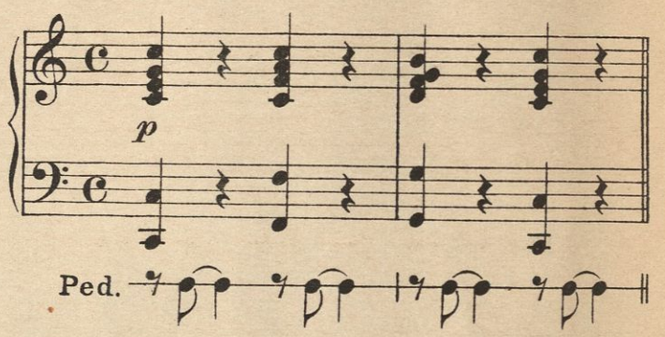


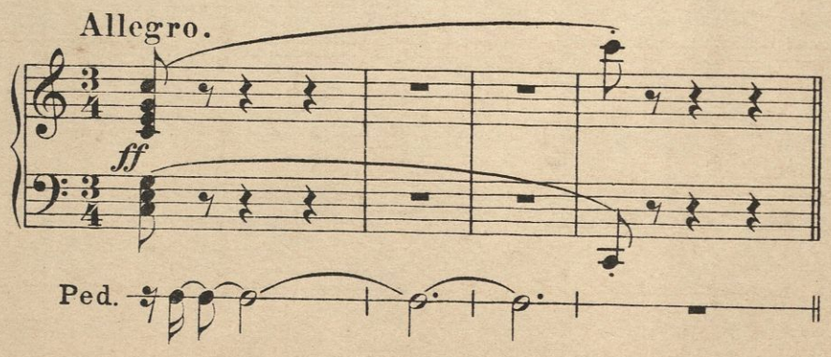




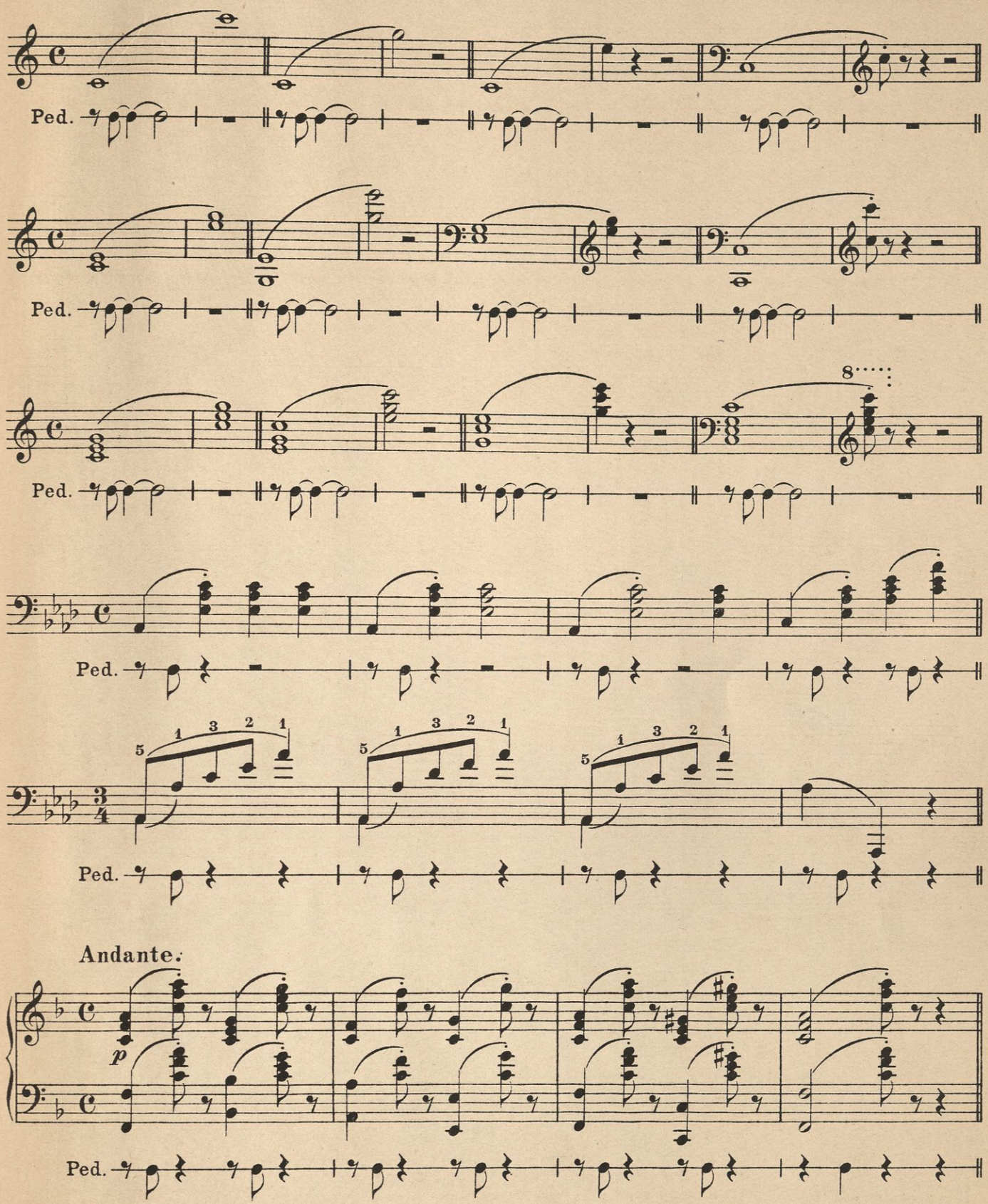




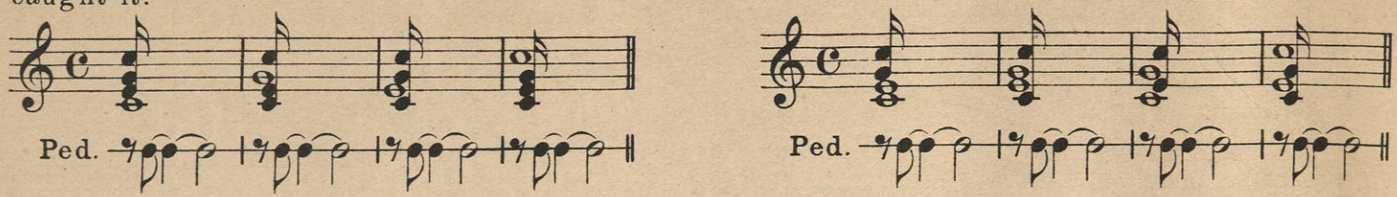




Another effect is frequently made use of, the portamento, carrying a tone from a lower or higher pitch and vica versa. Catch the tone with the pedal and release it when the next one is struck.

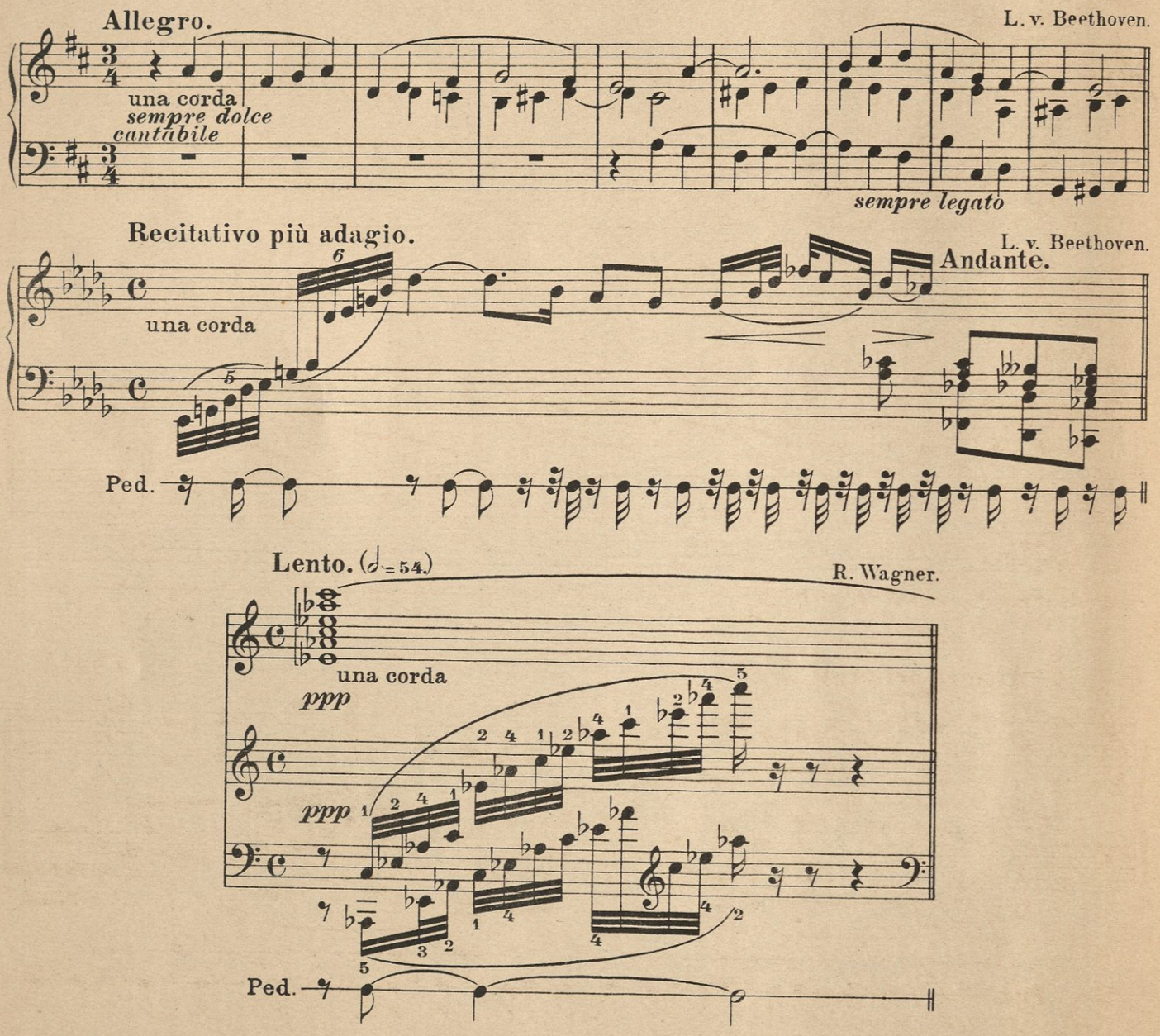


The following study will be of great technical value, and also assist one in prolonging individual notes of the chord. After striking the chord hold the note with the finger until the pedal has caught it.



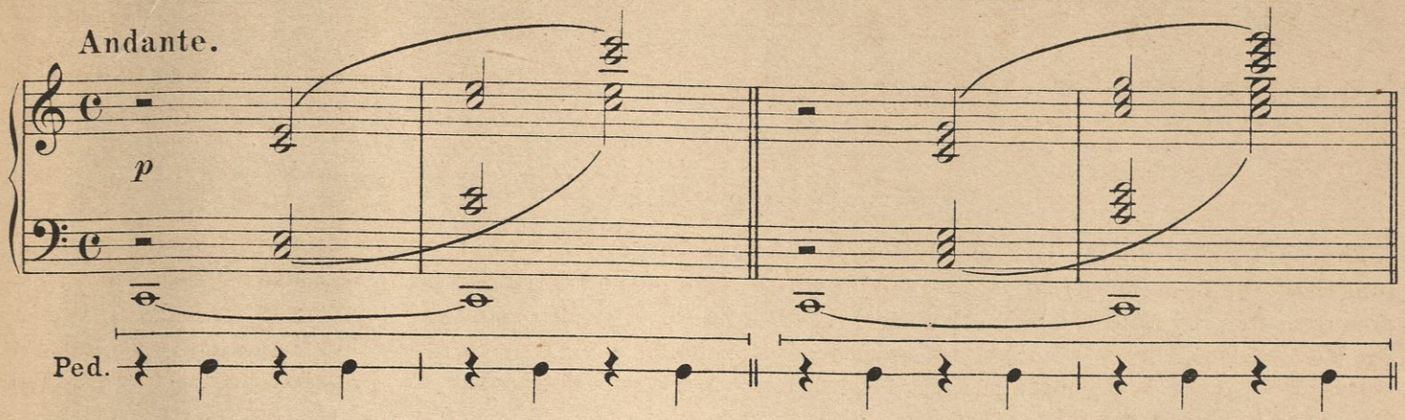
Chapter IV.

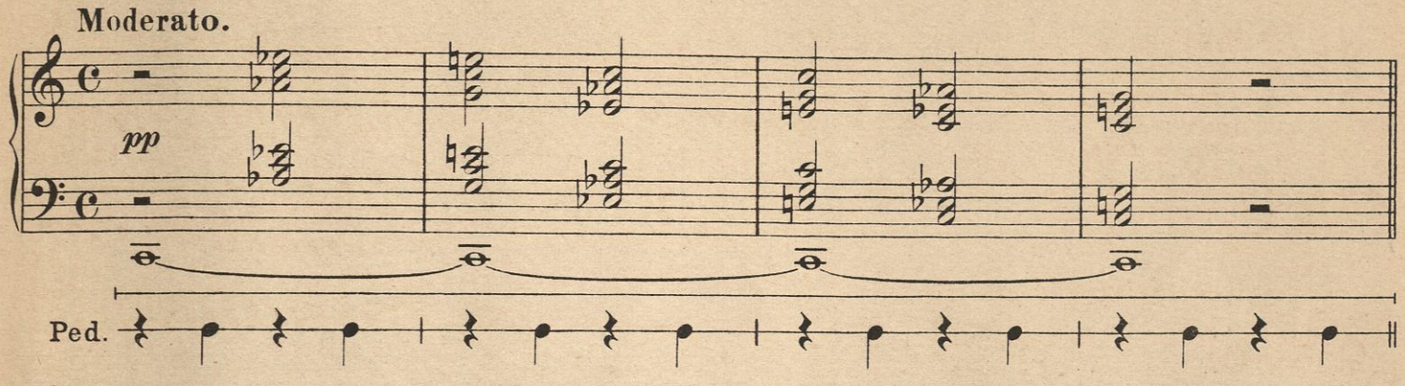
The soft pedal on the Grand Pianoforte lessens the number of strings, on upright instruments the length of the hammer stroke is shortened; while on square instruments the impact is softened by interposing a strip of felt or some soft material. This pedal is used in playing passages marked *p*, *Piano,* or *pp*, *Pianissimo*. There is no special mark or character to designate its use other than the above mentioned terms. Beethoven and contemporary writers have inserted *con sordino,* or *una corde,* in their works, so this pedal is used for that effect.

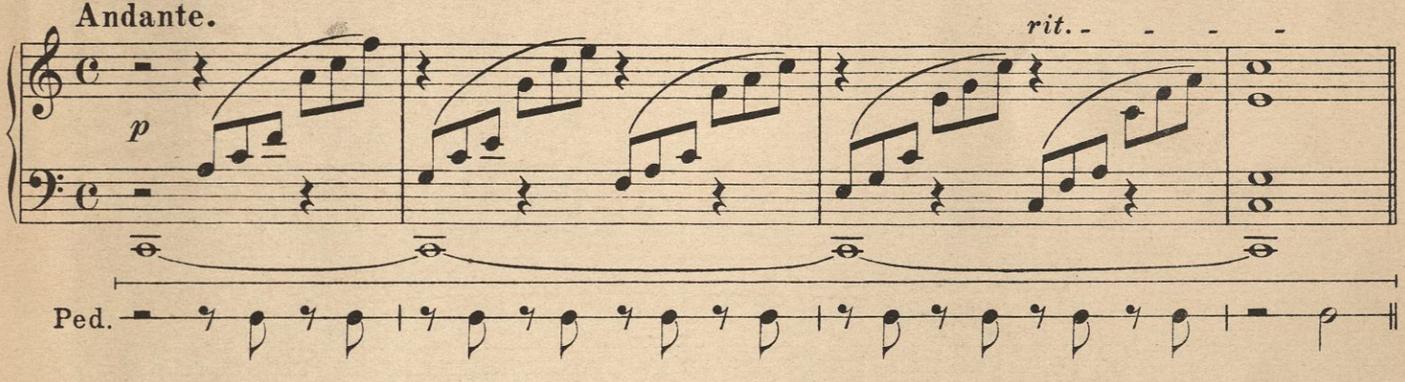


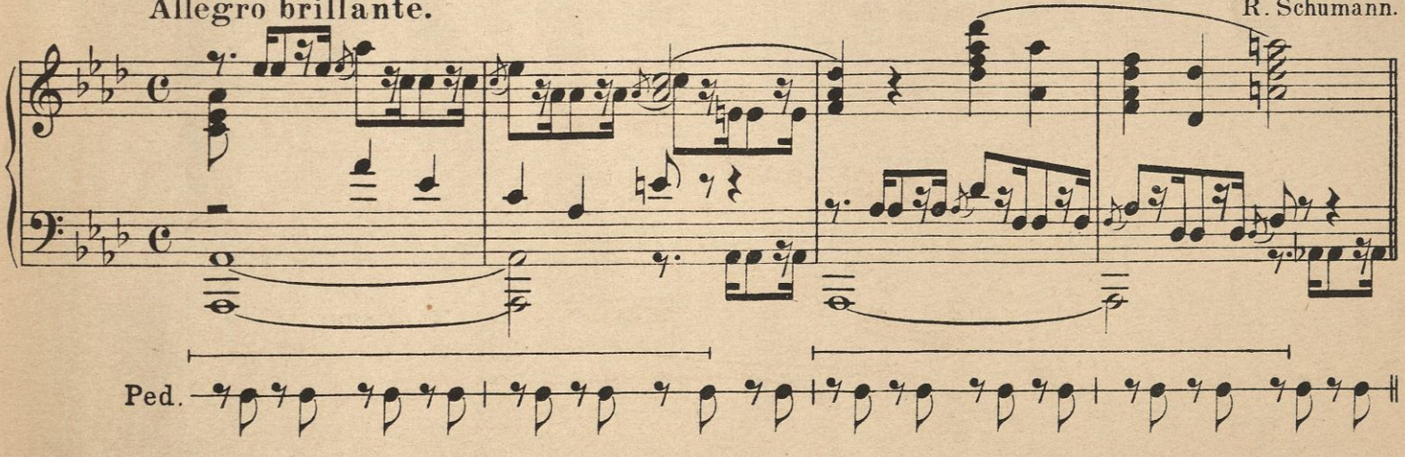
Chapter V.

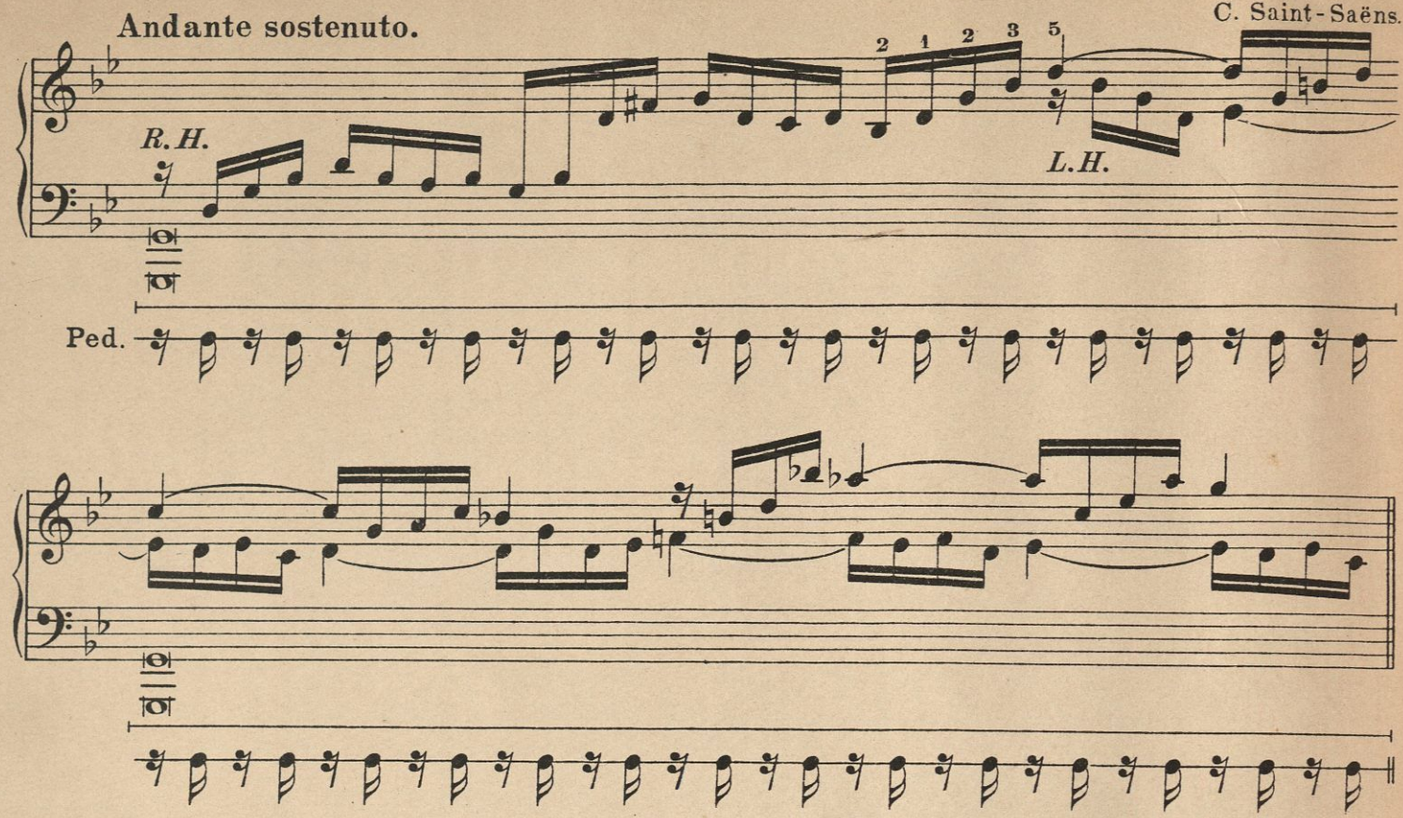
The Sostenuto (middle) pedal on the Grand Pianoforte sustains all the lower Bass Tones up to the middle octave. Modern composers have used it quite extensively. The mark used is the straight line ⌐————————⌐. The pedal is to be depressed after the note has been struck and held as long as the line continues.



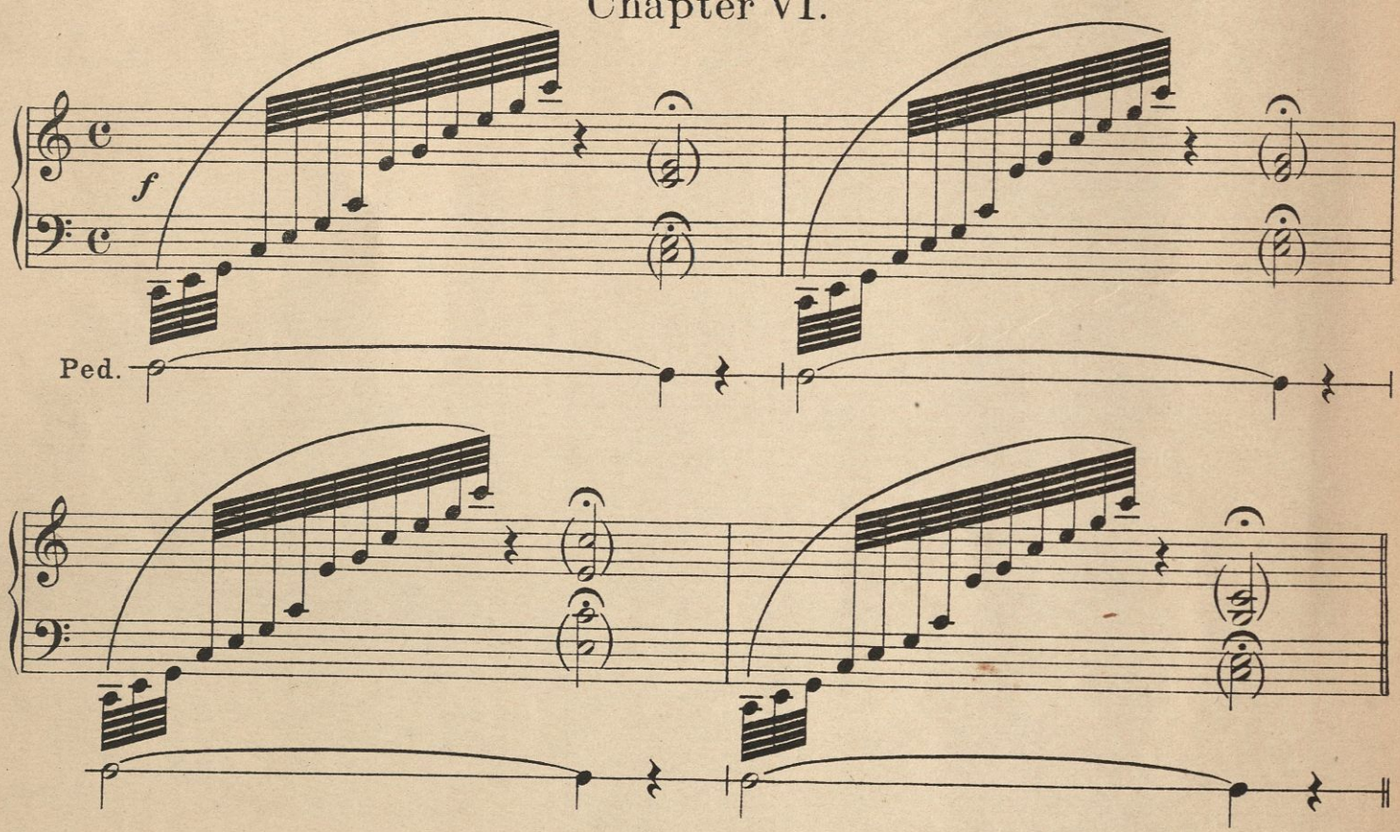








Chapter VI.



The above illustration shows how certain tones in a chord may be retained after the effect of the arpeggio has been released. Press down notes in the brackets without sounding them, then let the pedal up. These have been termed *echo* or *phantom* chords.